

REPERTORY PLAYS No. 4. 6/11

AUGUSTUS IN SEARCH OF A FATHER



HAROLD CHAPIN

LONDON & GLASGOW: GOWANS & GONNELL

AUGUSTUS IN SEARCH OF A FATHER

HAROLD CHAPIN

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ALBERTA

DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

REPORT

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FOREWORD : BY THE DIRECTOR OF THE SCOTTISH REPERTORY THEATRE

"AUGUSTUS IN SEARCH OF A FATHER" made its first professional appearance on March 21st, 1910, in a triple bill with G. B. S. as the other part, a good contrast to "THE MAN OF DESTINY" and "HOW HE LIED TO HER HUSBAND." A great deal depends on the producer in presenting a play so elusive yet natural ; it must "get over the foot-lights," yet it must be "natural." Its production was conspicuous in number of successful productions by Mr. Kenelm Foss. To present a London square at night, was an achievement that will remain in the memory of beholders, with the excellent portrayal of the philosophic and sentimental night-watchman of Mr. Campbell Gullan—a successful portrait in a populous gallery of the old men he has portrayed, while as "Augustus" Perceval Clark proved the right foil.

A. W.

GLASGOW, *March*, 1911.

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[EXTRACT FROM
REPERTORY THEATRE PROGRAMME
Monday, March 21st, 1910]

* Both plays preceded by

AUGUSTUS IN SEARCH OF A
FATHER

By HAROLD CHAPIN

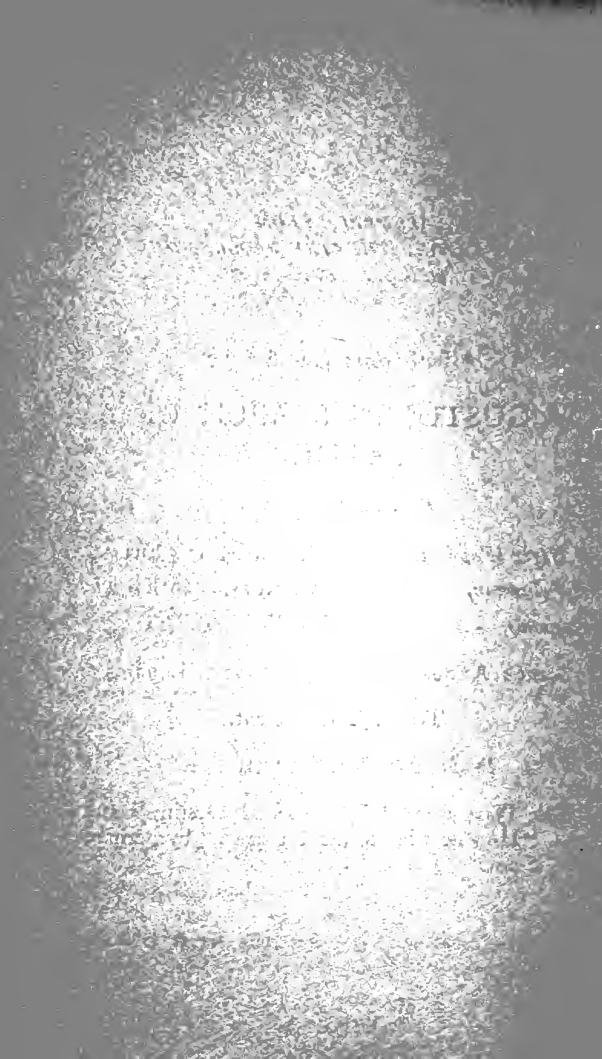
<i>A Night Watchman,</i>	-	Mr. CAMPBELL GULLAN.
<i>A Policeman,</i>	-	Mr. NORMAN M'KEOWN.
<i>Augustus,</i>	-	Mr. PERCEVAL CLARK.

Scene : A square in the West End of London.

Time : The Present.

Produced by Mr. KENELM FOSS.

* The Plays were "The Man of Destiny" and
"How he Lied to her Husband," by Bernard
Shaw.



AUGUSTUS IN SEARCH OF A FATHER

CHARACTERS

A NIGHT WATCHMAN.—*A stolid, gruff-voiced old man of 70. Wears corduroys, a heavy great-coat, and a large, old, bowler hat. His beard and eyebrows are shaggy, but his upper lip is more or less clean-shaven. He speaks slowly and with dense authority.*

AUGUSTUS.—*A young man of 27. Typical Bowery "sport." Dressed in striped jersey, light trousers, very tight fitting, and a light jacket and waistcoat. Pointed-toed brown boots much the worse for wear, and a narrow-brimmed black bowler hat. He needs a shave, and—though spry—looks very down on his luck.*

A POLICEMAN.—*Of the usual type, but suffers from a bump of facetiousness and a desire to be funny.*

TIME AND PLACE.—*The corner of a London Square early on a winter's morning.*

The Night Watchman is discovered sitting forward in his shanty smoking a short pipe. As curtain rises the Policeman paces slowly across back from R. to L. and then down pavement L. He pauses and looks at shanty, then comes to trestle down L. and leans on it and hails the Night Watchman facetiously.

POLICEMAN

Hullo, you're not dead, then ?

WATCHMAN

(*Looking up.*) Good Gawd, no! Oo's been saying
I was ?

POLICEMAN

No one. I...

WATCHMAN

Do I look ill ? I feels alright.

POLICEMAN

It was just my...

WATCHMAN

P'raps I was over sound off.

POLICEMAN

It was only my fun.

WATCHMAN

(*Wondering.*) What was ?

POLICEMAN

Oh! About you're being dead.

WATCHMAN

But I ain't.

POLICEMAN

No...(bitterly.) I know you ain't. I never thought
you was. You can't see the joke. I was trying
to be *funny*, see ?

WATCHMAN

Funny? I don't see much fun in that.

POLICEMAN

(Retreating.) Oh, good-night.

WATCHMAN

Blimme, what's up with you? Stop and 'ave a warm.

POLICEMAN

Thanks, don't mind if I do.

WATCHMAN

Then why don't you?

POLICEMAN

I give it up.

[Enters enclosure by stepping over low end of pole. He leans against shanty which sways.]

WATCHMAN

'Ere steady on! Do you want to 'ave me over?

POLICEMAN

(With a return of facetiousness.) Not to-night, thank you.

WATCHMAN

(Quite seriously.) I shan't be here to-morrow.

POLICEMAN

(After warming hands for a moment in silence.) Cold.

WATCHMAN

Who?

POLICEMAN

(*Nonplussed.*) We... The weather...

WATCHMAN

You speak for yourself. I ain't.

POLICEMAN

(*Humorously once more.*) Not a crime to feel the cold, is it? (*Pauses for a reply.*) I say I shan't be dismissed the force for mentioning it, shall I? (*Pauses again, still no reply from the Watchman.*) Oh, Lor! (*Changing the subject.*) Rather an uncomfortable sort of place to spend the night, this.

WATCHMAN

I've seen worse.

POLICEMAN

(*Engagingly.*) I'm sure.

WATCHMAN

'Ow about 'Ampstead, right facing the 'eath?
Or the middle of Waterloo Bridge, with it raining cats and dogs...

[*The Policeman starts to make a humorous remark but thinks better of it. The Watchman regards him severely.*]

WATCHMAN

What say?

POLICEMAN

I was only going to say :... "Yes, yes" ?

WATCHMAN

Oh! (*Resuming.*) Well, 'ow about them places, eh? Or the top o' the Highgate Harchway? Or 'Obing Viaduck where the road cleaners drench you down every morning reg'ler. Or...well, or some place like that? Why this is a nice sheltered locality longside them.

POLICEMAN

(*Convinced.*) Yes, I can see it must be.

WATCHMAN

Then what did you want to talk such nonsense for?

POLICEMAN

You know you're very hard to get on with, you are really. 'Ere I try to be agreeable and chatty in return for a warm and you snaps me up. I'm 'urt. You can't 'elp 'aving no sense of 'umor, poor chap, but when a...a *guest* at your fireside tries to be pleasant and agreeable you've no business to go snappin' of 'im up like this. [*Watchman laughs gruffly.*]

POLICEMAN

Oh, you see the joke of *that* do you? Perverted old individual. [*Watchman snores softly.*]

POLICEMAN

Eh? [*Snore repeated.*]

POLICEMAN

'Ere I say you're a nice sort of watchman, I don't think. I'll make a note of that. "Watchman on drainage job asleep."

WATCHMAN

(*Quite calmly, without opening his eyes.*) I shall reply that the Policeman on duty mesmerised me with 'is funny little way.

POLICEMAN

(*Hastily stepping over low pole R.*) Well, think I'll be saying good-night.

WATCHMAN

Good-night.

POLICEMAN

(*By exit down R.*) Good-night, old Stick-in-the-mud.

WATCHMAN

(*Coming out of his shelter angrily.*) Look 'ere !
Don't you go calling me out of me name !
[*Policemen exits down R.*

WATCHMAN

Tryin' to be funny. 'E ought to be on the 'alls.
I wonder they 'ave 'im in the force.
[*Busies himself with fire.*

[*Enter Augustus up R. He is whistling dolefully but walking fairly briskly to keep warm, hands deep in pockets. He comes down C. and stops as he reaches the front of the shelter. The Watchman is just re-entering the shanty and has his back full to Augustus.*

AUGUSTUS

Gee whiz ! You look cozy. Can I have a warm up ?

WATCHMAN

(*Glancing over his shoulder as he pats up sacking on seat inside shelter.*) Why shouldn't you?

AUGUSTUS

And yet again why should I? (*He steps over pole and stands R. of fire warming his hands. The Watchman is well out of his sight.*) Cold, ain't it?

WATCHMAN

I feel alright.

AUGUSTUS

Well that's a blessing, anyway. I don't. My what a fire. I haven't felt warm for a month. The dive where I have been dossing is like a refrigerator.

WATCHMAN

Where's that?

AUGUSTUS

Over Edgware Road way, Bell Street, to be exact.

WATCHMAN

Why aren't you there now?

AUGUSTUS

Tariff too high for me. (*Shows pockets.*) Stoney, boss, stoney.

WATCHMAN

Drink or gambling?

AUGUSTUS

How rude you are? Nothing of the sort. Depression in trade.

WATCHMAN

Trade *is* bad. What do you expect with this government? D'you smoke?

AUGUSTUS

(*Nodding.*) And chew.

WATCHMAN

Chewin's immoral and ungodly. It's a disgusting vice that's what it is. Have a smoke?

[*Proffers pouch.*]

AUGUSTUS

Eh? Rather. You're a trump.

[*Takes pouch and rolls himself a cigarette, taking papers from jacket pocket.*]

WATCHMAN

(*Eyeing cigarette papers unfavourably.*) Why don't you smoke a pipe like a Christian?

AUGUSTUS

Haven't got a pipe. (*Lighting up.*) Don't like pipes anyway. Cigs are more sporty. You're as bad as my old dad was. Where's the difference?

WATCHMAN

(*Laying down the law decidedly.*) Cigs is vice. Pipes isn't.

AUGUSTUS

Oh, rats. *[Hands back pouch.*

WATCHMAN

(Taking pouch and observing Augustus' hand as he does so.) Blimme, 'ow your 'and shakes. What's up with you?

AUGUSTUS

Guess I'm suffering from a bad attack of nante denarii sometimes known as gotno spondulico, which is invariably attended with nante monjary, and consequent shakes.

WATCHMAN

(Greatly impressed.) Where do you feel it?

AUGUSTUS

Sinking, 'ollo feeling inside, and a nasty, light headache.

WATCHMAN

Do you mean to say you're 'ungry?

AUGUSTUS

I had some breakfast yesterday.

WATCHMAN

Why didn't you say so afore? *(Bends down and produces from under seat a paper containing bread and meat which he passes to Augustus.)* D'ye want a knife? *[Offers a clasp knife.*

AUGUSTUS

'Pon my Sam you're a white man! (*Opens knife and starts eating.*) Bit tricky, eh?

[*Alluding to the difficulties of eating with a clasp knife.*]

WATCHMAN

Ah, it takes some time to get used to it. (*Watches Augustus eating in silence for a moment.*) Let me know if the knife shuts up on your tongue, won't you?

AUGUSTUS

(*In surprise.*) Eh?

WATCHMAN

It used to 'ave a narsty 'abit of shuttin' up like. I tightened the screw a bit the other day. One sometimes makes things a bit better by tinkering them about, and sometimes a lot worse.

AUGUSTUS

It works all serene now.

WATCHMAN

I 'aven't 'ad the opportunity of tryin' it—not liking to run any risks of cuttin' meself, you understand. I'm gettin' a bit old to try experiments. Now a young chap such as you 'asn't no cause to bother about a cut lip—they 'eals up all right nine times out o' ten, whereas in any one o' my age a pois'nous wound is a narsty matter,

AUGUSTUS

Very.

[*Continues eating.*]

WATCHMAN

(*After another pause.*) I suppose you know it's a bad thing to eat so fast—especially when you're 'ungry. You'll be gettin' 'eart-burn.

AUGUSTUS

I'll risk it. Upon my Sam you are a brick, though. If I was the sentimental sort I'd say you was the first—the only one to treat me decent since I've been back.

WATCHMAN

Back? Where from?

AUGUSTUS

States.

WATCHMAN

Meanin' America?

AUGUSTUS

(*With mouth full.*) Um.

WATCHMAN

What part? [*Augustus appears not to hear.*]

WATCHMAN

What part of America?

AUGUSTUS

Top left hand corner.

WATCHMAN

(*Severely.*) Don't be funny. I asked you what part of America you was in.

AUGUSTUS

(*Hurrying through the information.*) New York mostly—out West, and in 'Frisco a bit, but N'York mostly.

WATCHMAN

What sort of place is it?

AUGUSTUS

A 1. Tip-top. Best ever.

WATCHMAN

'Ere, no irreverence. What trade was you in?

AUGUSTUS

Trade! Now do I look like a trades-person? I was a pro-fessional.

WATCHMAN

Well, what perfession, then?

AUGUSTUS

I'll give you three guesses.

WATCHMAN

I asked you—I 'aint a guesser.

AUGUSTUS

Persistency, thy name is...

WATCHMAN

I asked a civil question, I expects a...

AUGUSTUS

A civil answer. I've heard that before. I'll try.
(With exaggerated courtesy.) I was assistant
 deputy stamp lickler at the White House.
 Y'see there's so much danger of the Tammany
 Bosses poisoning Teddy that they have to
 find galoots with fine constitutions...like me
 ...to...

WATCHMAN

(Severely.) You ain't telling the truth!

AUGUSTUS

Discovered! Did you expect me to!

WATCHMAN

(Stolidly.) I did.

AUGUSTUS

Well you are a lalapaloosa! You deserve it for
 your faith. I respect an elderly yob. There's
 something touching about one. I was a sport,
 see! *(Watchman does not see.)* You know.
 Did a bit with the gloves. *(Spars at imaginary
 antagonist. Watchman remains absolutely dense.)*
 Bunco steerer. Never hear of a bunco
 steerer? A—a—Oh, lor a "sport." You
 know what a "sport" is don't you?

WATCHMAN

Fishin'?

AUGUSTUS

Fishing? Crimy, No. A "sport"...Oh, poker, poker you know... [*Deals imaginary pack of cards.*]

WATCHMAN

Card-sharper?

AUGUSTUS

Only when necessary, but you're getting warmer. Sort of guide, philosopher, and friend to any one who wanted to see life and spend money. I milled a bit too, when I could find a backer.

WATCHMAN

(*After a pause.*) I've got a son out there—doing well...not your sort at all...thank Gawd. Why don't you get work?

AUGUSTUS

Well, y'see it's like this: I'm not the working sort. I'm a "sport" I am. Over in God's country I could always make good, but over here...when I tried to arrange a match in the back room of a little pub...just a few friendly rounds you understand—the Boss said the Police would do for his licence. Rot! As if he couldn't have squared 'em. Then I started a poker dive—tip-top, I can tell you ...but no one came but the cops and *they* didn't lose any money. You're no "sports" here. The only swabs willing to lose money seem to be the foreign waiters, and you have to be a foreigner to get them. Talk about free trade!

WATCHMAN

Bettin's sinful. You're on the road to the pit.

AUGUSTUS

Pit be blowed. I haven't enough for the gallery.

WATCHMAN

You are laughing on the brink of 'ell flame what can't never be quenched, for his mercy endureth for ever. (*Very impressively.*) Amen.

AUGUSTUS

Glad to hear you've done. I wonder you talk to me if I'm such a gnostic, let alone give me grub.

WATCHMAN

Talking can't 'urt me. I've 'ad worse nor you around my fire afore to-night.

AUGUSTUS

Have you now ? [*Returning knife.*

WATCHMAN

You 'eard of the Willesden Wehr-Wolf? Well, 'e was took sittin' as it might be there. That was while I was working in the 'Arrow Road. It was a dark 'ailstormy night, wi' a wind as went through you. 'E comes to my fire just as day was comin' on and 'e says... "can I 'ave a warm?" and I says... "W'y not?" 'E was soaking wet, and 'e fair steamed aside my fire. Steamed like a kettle 'e did until a cop comes up thinking I was on fire and then they nabbed 'im. 'Orrible, savage lookin' man 'e was. You could fancy 'im drinkin' 'ot blood. 'Ave a drop?

AUGUSTUS

(Starts.) What? (*Sees that the Watchman is proffering can.*) Oh, not for a bit, thanks.

WATCHMAN

It was through me as the Tootin' murderers got 'ung. Ever 'eard o' them?

AUGUSTUS

(*Sarcastically.*) Old pals of mine.

WATCHMAN

And that young chap as shot 'isself in a 'ansom. Lord De Vees—

AUGUSTUS

Poor old De Vees! We was at Oxford together.

WATCHMAN

Well, 'e 'ad a warm at my fire, and give me 'alf a quid just before 'e done it. I've got it now.

AUGUSTUS

What, ain't you spent it?

WATCHMAN

Spend a half-quid as was given me by a Lord as committed suicide! Don't be silly. I've got it in the glass case with my old father's watch and some shells and things...

AUGUSTUS

Shells and things?

WATCHMAN

Lord, yes. I like relics o' the great. You see you ain't nothin' to what I've 'ad around my fire—not yet.

AUGUSTUS

(*Thoughtfully.*) Thanks. Sounds hopeful for the future. I don't mind 'aving a drink now. (*Takes can and drinks a mouthful—he spits it out again with a wry face.*) Here! What is it?

WATCHMAN

What is it? Why tea!

AUGUSTUS

Stale tea, and cold, too, on a night like this! You ought to be ashamed of yourself. It might have seriously upset me. I haven't tasted tea since... (*Pauses suddenly.*) Since Gawd knows when.

WATCHMAN

More used to beer, I suppose.

AUGUSTUS

Wrong, boss. Whisky is my mark. Rye for preff.

WATCHMAN

Strong drink is sinful.

AUGUSTUS

“Strong drink is sinful”...“Bettin’s sinful”...was there anything else you said?...Yes b’gosh!
“Cigs is vice!”

WATCHMAN

So they is.

AUGUSTUS

Granted, boss, granted. I haven't tasted tea...
not since.... And I hope I never may again.
Leastways, not cold.

WATCHMAN

What did you come over 'ere for ?

AUGUSTUS

Eh ? Oh, one thing and another.

WATCHMAN

Nothin' in particular ?

AUGUSTUS

No...Yes. (*Seriously and in a different tone.*) To
hunt up my father and mother.

WATCHMAN

'Ave you found 'em ?

AUGUSTUS

I don't know.

WATCHMAN

Don't know.

AUGUSTUS

No. I think I have...but I'm not sure. And I'm
not sure whether 'e'll be pleased to see me.

WATCHMAN

Oh. 'Ad a tiff? You know where 'e is then?

AUGUSTUS

Umhum. I know where I can find him. But
I'm not sure whether 'e'll be pleased when
I go to him.

WATCHMAN

Course he will. 'E's one o' your sort, I suppose.

AUGUSTUS

Why?

WATCHMAN

Like father like son. That's gospel.

AUGUSTUS

(*Whimsically.*) Is it? [*Changes his position restlessly.*

WATCHMAN

Ain't you tired leanin' about? Fetch yourself
that barrer.

AUGUSTUS

Thanks.

[*Steps over fire and places barrow to L. of hut
and sits in such a way that he is out of sight
of the Watchman, but well in the glow of the
firelight.*

WATCHMAN

You're never warm enough there. Move around
to the fire.

AUGUSTUS

I'm alright, thanks.

[A pause, Augustus starts to speak.]

WATCHMAN

What say ?

AUGUSTUS

I was thinking about your boy that you said went out to the States ? I wonder if by any chance I might have met him. What was his name ?

WATCHMAN

Oh, you wouldn't never 'ave met 'im. 'E was Honest.

AUGUSTUS

That's good. Still you might tell me his name.

WATCHMAN

Augustus Herbert Alfred Moon.

AUGUSTUS

(Nods quietly to himself.) No, I never met him.

WATCHMAN

Of course not. Went out nine years ago—'e was eighteen then. Started as a plumber and gasfitter. Doing well by now.

AUGUSTUS

Oh ?

WATCHMAN

What might you mean by "Oh"?

AUGUSTUS

How do you know he's doing well?

WATCHMAN

Sure to be.

AUGUSTUS

You haven't heard from him?

WATCHMAN

Not yet.

AUGUSTUS

Not *yet*? Nine years!

WATCHMAN

But then 'e was busy and 'ad 'is way to make.
Shouldn't be surprised if he owned a big
business by now.

AUGUSTUS

Let's hope so. But suppose he doesn't. Suppose
he hasn't got on?

WATCHMAN

Can't suppose such a thing. 'E was Honest.

AUGUSTUS

That does make a difference—in plumbing.

WATCHMAN

It makes all the difference. 'E was Band of 'Ope from a boy, 'e never knew the taste of strong drink, 'e never touched a card. Why 'e was simply bound to get on.

AUGUSTUS

People don't always.

WATCHMAN

'E 'as.

AUGUSTUS

How about... *[Checks himself confusedly.]*

WATCHMAN

Eh? How about what?

AUGUSTUS

Was there a...a... *(Sees a way to ask the question.)*
I mean did any one hear from him?

WATCHMAN

Yes...once.

AUGUSTUS

Who?

WATCHMAN

(Gruffly.) Never you mind.

AUGUSTUS

Was it someone you didn't like?

WATCHMAN

(With some heat.) 'E wrote to some girl 'e'd been walkin' out with, he wrote to her as soon as 'e got ashore. Silly affectionate letter sayin' as 'e was 'omesick.

AUGUSTUS

P'raps he was.

WATCHMAN

(Indignantly.) 'Omesick, with 'is way to make ! She said as 'e was engaged to 'er too. Nonsense ! I told 'er as 'e'd forgot all about her.

AUGUSTUS

Umhum. I suppose she's forgot all about him, too, long before this.

WATCHMAN

Not she. She still talks about 'im, I'm told.

AUGUSTUS

What ! Ain't she married ?

WATCHMAN

Girls don't marry so easy in England, my lad. Especially when they chuck away good chances as she's done.

AUGUSTUS

(Very earnestly.) I say, I want to ask you something. Just for the sake of an argument, suppose your boy hasn't got on. Suppose he were to come back, hard up,...down on his luck...

altered from when you knew him. Suppose he'd even been in prison...

WATCHMAN

(*Angrily.*) Are you talking about my Haugustus ?

AUGUSTUS

Only for the sake of argument.

[*Policeman enters above square L. and crosses behind shanty coming down slowly R. of enclosure during dialogue.*]

WATCHMAN

Well, don't. I tells you 'e was bound to get on...

AUGUSTUS

'E might have been unlucky.

WATCHMAN

There's no such thing as luck.

AUGUSTUS

Oh, isn't there ? How about an accident ?

WATCHMAN

'E'd 'ave written. 'Is not writing proves...

AUGUSTUS

But if he hadn't ?

POLICEMAN

(*Who has been listening.*) Excuse me, my lad, but if you're trying to make old Stick-in-the-mud see a joke, I shall have to call the ambulance for one of you.

WATCHMAN

'Ullo, Comic Cuts. Tryin' to be funny again?

POLICEMAN

Oh, we are gettin' on. He knows I was tryin' to be funny.

WATCHMAN

This young man wasn't.

AUGUSTUS

No, but I was trying to make him see an argument.
I ought to have known it was no good.

POLICEMAN

Why? Do you know old Stick-in-the-mud?

AUGUSTUS

No. How should I?

POLICEMAN

Why shouldn't you? He ain't likely to lead you astray.

WATCHMAN

Funny again.

POLICEMAN

Appreciated at last.

AUGUSTUS

(*Rising.*) Well, good night, Boss, and thank you.

WATCHMAN

Sit still. You ain't in no 'urry.

AUGUSTUS

No,...but...

POLICEMAN

If you want to go off as soon as I comes up, I shall have to keep an eye on you as a suspicious character.

AUGUSTUS

What do you live on ? Pins ?

POLICEMAN

No. Why ?

AUGUSTUS

You're so sharp.

POLICEMAN

(*Laughing.*) That's good. Now I can always laugh at a joke at me own expense.

AUGUSTUS

I suppose you'll go and crack that to the cook.

POLICEMAN

(*Surprised.*) Cook ? What cook ?

AUGUSTUS

It's a joke, Mr. Officer. Cook. Policeman.

WATCHMAN

Bless you, 'e ain't the cook sort. 'E's married.

POLICEMAN

How do you know ?

WATCHMAN

You look it. Anxious, hard-worked, get-the-break-fast look about you. Better lookin' P'lice over in America, eh, me lad ?

POLICEMAN

(*To Augustus.*) Oh, so you're from America ? What part ?

AUGUSTUS

North-West Territory.

WATCHMAN

Why you told me New York.

AUGUSTUS

I was out West most of the time.

POLICEMAN

Then why tell 'im New York ?

AUGUSTUS

You're mighty sharp, aren't you ? Because we'd been mentioning New York, and I said I'd been there. If you're so sharp you'll cut yourself.

POLICEMAN

Or somebody else, p'raps. What business might you have been in out there ?

AUGUSTUS

I might have been President, but I wasn't.

POLICEMAN

What was you then?

AUGUSTUS

Steward on board train.

WATCHMAN

(Stolidly surprised.) Why you told me something about...

AUGUSTUS

(Fiercely under his breath to Watchman.) Shut up, can't you.

WATCHMAN

(In a loud and very hoarse whisper.) Oh, that's it, is it? Right. Once tip me the wink and I can be as silent as the grave...as silent...

[Goes on whispering unintelligibly but loudly and winking to Augustus.]

POLICEMAN

(Startled.) 'Ullo! What's up with old Stick-in-the-mud? Sounds as if 'e'd swallowed a phonograph.

WATCHMAN

(Turning on the Policeman and assuming a bullying tone.) Never you mind what's the matter with me. You're too inquisitive, see? You want to know too much you do, see? See? *(To Augustus in a knowing whisper.)* That's 'ow I talks to 'im.

POLICEMAN

(*Amazed.*) Now what's up? You are a rum 'un rounding on a chap like that. I was only askin' a few polite questions. (*To Augustus.*) You don't mind a few friendly questions?

AUGUSTUS

(*Ill at ease.*) Oh, that's alright.

POLICEMAN

Righto. [*Holds out hand across pole.*]

AUGUSTUS

(*Affecting not to notice hand.*) When you came up I was trying to make him see an argument.

WATCHMAN

(*Stolidly.*) You was trying to make me talk nonsense. My Haugustus, indeed!

AUGUSTUS

(*Hopelessly.*) Well, I think I'll say good night once more for the last time. You're a good sort. Bye-bye, officer.

POLICEMAN

Gently. I'm a bit interested in you.

AUGUSTUS

That's nice. [*Starts to move away.*]

POLICEMAN

No, don't go. Please. You're rather like a gentleman I'm lookin' for. Suppose you

come along o' me and have a nice warm and a nap at the station. (*Neither he nor Augustus move a step.*) If you ain't 'im no harm's done, and if you do happen to be the gent, how much nicer to be took and done with instead of walking about all night. What do you say ?

AUGUSTUS

I say good night.

POLICEMAN

I thought so.

[*Policeman stoops and runs under pole L. into enclosure as Augustus runs out of opening in front of fire and off down R. below square. The Policeman follows closely fumbling for his whistle.*]

WATCHMAN

I 'ad an idea as... (*Comes out of enclosure and looks off below square. Whistle heard. Watchman peers into distance. Whistle repeated further off.*) 'Ullo. 'E can't do it alone. (*Pause.*) I can't 'ardly see 'em. (*Pause.*) They're at the bend. (*Whistle very far off.*) 'Ope to Gawd 'e won't be 'eard. (*Whistle a little nearer.*) 'Ullo ! W'y they're... (*Goes to upper entrance and looks off.*) Yes they are. (*Whistle considerably closer.*) 'Ere we go round the... (*Comes down and re-enters enclosure.*) I like to be out of the way. [*Re-enters hut.*]

[*Whistle very close to R. upper entrance. Re-enter Augustus above square R. running*]

and out of breath. He makes for exit down L. but as he reaches C. trips against low end of pole and falls. The Policeman runs on R. above square and pounces on him before he can rise, pulling him to his feet by the coat collar. They are in front of enclosure and R. of it.

AUGUSTUS

(*Panting.*) Alright. You've nailed me. I'll go quiet.

POLICEMAN

Go quiet? You'd better. Let's have a look at you.
[*Holding Augustus by collar and wrist starts him towards fire.*]

AUGUSTUS

(*Resisting.*) I'll go quiet. Don't...

POLICEMAN

Come over to the fire.

AUGUSTUS

(*Struggling fiercely.*) You don't know my face.
You'll be sorry if...

POLICEMAN

Why, ain't you pretty?

AUGUSTUS

(*Angrily.*) You'll come to grief over that funny little way of yours. I'm your man right enough.

POLICEMAN

I want old Stick-in-the-mud to have a look at you.

AUGUSTUS

No. No.

[Struggles fiercely.]

POLICEMAN

Yes, ducky, yes.

AUGUSTUS

I warn you if you take me in sight of him...
You can look at me all you like at the Station.

POLICEMAN

Let's look at you now.

AUGUSTUS

I've warned you.

POLICEMAN

(Getting him a step.) You have and thank you...

AUGUSTUS

I told you if...

[Breaks off suddenly and ceases to resist.]

AUGUSTUS

All right. I'll...

[They reach the edge of the firelight. Augustus suddenly bends down and embracing Policeman's knees heaves him over his hip against pole which falls with him. Augustus, released, rushes off down R. as before.]

POLICEMAN

(*Scrambling to his feet.*) He can't get round. I'll...
 [*Runs off above square blowing whistle.*
Augustus immediately re-enters over railings.

AUGUSTUS

He'll have a nice little scamper. (*Goes up stage and looks cautiously after Policeman. Whistle heard. He crosses behind shanty to Exit down L.*)
 Good night, boss.

WATCHMAN

Good night, me lad. Good luck.

AUGUSTUS

(*Pauses.*) Good luck...?

WATCHMAN

Hadn't you better...?

AUGUSTUS

Half a mo... Your boy...

WATCHMAN

(*Impatiently.*) Good Lord !

AUGUSTUS

(*Almost pleadingly.*) Is...is your wife as sure he's got on ? Wouldn't his mother be pleased...

WATCHMAN

She's dead.

42 AUGUSTUS IN SEARCH OF A FATHER

AUGUSTUS

Dead. I thought mothers waited till their boys came back. Oh, well, good night.

WATCHMAN

Good night. Be off. Good luck.

AUGUSTUS

(Under his voice.) Dad.

[Runs off down L. A whistle heard in the distance R. The Watchman chuckles gruffly to himself.]

CURTAIN

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